



By Howard Powers

Saturday, July 7, was a scorching day at the Boeh family farm polo field near Bettendorf, Iowa, with temperatures in the 90s and a searing breeze from the south. But a good number of people were not deterred, as the crowd was hefty. For anyone sitting out in the open, it was a good day to get a nasty sunburn.

My grandson and I were the first visitors to arrive at the gate, which opened at 1:00. We found parking assistance and shuttle vehicles in good supply, but few people arriving at that early hour, since the polo game did not begin until 5:00pm.

A row of about 10 chalets were set up and sponsored by various business groups. Most were unoccupied for most of the afternoon. The cost of these chalets varied from \$300 to \$2500, so were important in the fundraising, which was the main purpose of the event.

We were promised food and entertainment by Pepsico, Inc., and Happy Joe's, who were corporate sponsors. Clowns, magic acts, and costumed characters were offered. A jumping demonstration by two well-mounted ladies, a demonstration of how polo players practice, and a dog agility trial, were on the afternoon agenda. Without being overly critical, I would say that watching horses jump 12 to 15 inch jumps is not very exciting, and the polo practice demo was very short.

The Timber Ridge Pony Club was also there, demonstrating the relatively similar sport of Polocrosse, where a rubber ball and a catch net are used instead of the standard ball and mallet. This was interesting.

The dog agility class (below) was fun and probably the highlight of the afternoon, prior to the actual polo game. The general



consensus was that the entertainment did not live up to the hype because of the long gaps between events.

The chalet portion of the fundraiser was different than any situation I have been exposed to, but admittedly, I am a novice at these events. For the general public, there was one small food concession stand, but the people associated with the chalets had special, well-stocked concessions open only to them. We innocently approached one of these stands and were informed that we were not eligible to buy food there. That was a bit of a shock, but the sponsors had paid for the services, so it was understandable.

The game was interesting and ended in a tie, which was appropriate for that day since it was a fundraising event. I was particularly interested in how the horses handled, since polo is one of the most severe sports for them, both in the speed, quick stops and turns, and in the abuse in reining. The horses were equipped with joint Pelham bits and Cavessons and only one horse that I saw actually had a strap to keep it from opening its mouth. The horses were calm, even in game conditions, and the riders usually took wide turns rather than sudden stops and rollbacks, which made it much easier on the horses.

The first five chukkers are 7½ minutes long, and the sixth and final one is seven minutes. Players can change horses between chukkers and some did. Even with the extreme heat, none of the horses were

lathered or breathing hard. The play was clean and only a few fouls were called. Only one rider was unhorsed. He was T-boned and hit the ground hard, but was able to continue play. Scoring was often, which added to the excitement of the game.

The rules of the game were explained in detail, which helped those of us who had not seen games previously, so when a foul was called, we understood why. There were some fast horses and good action, so it was an interesting and fun game to watch. We were in agreement that we would be back for the next game.

One official brought her 17-hand Thoroughbred over for the children, and anyone else who was interested, to see and pet. She gladly answered all of our questions about equipment, rules, and about the various breeds of horses used. Speed is paramount, as well as handling ability, so most of the horses used are Thoroughbreds. The horses at this event were good-looking and well-cared-for.

The Boeh family has provided an immaculate field for play, which is not an easy task with Iowa weather as it is. The grass was in good condition and well-mowed, so the footing for the horses was good. The Boehs are to be commended for the work that they have put into this endeavor.

A clinic was to follow on Sunday, but we did not attend.

We hope to travel to any future games.

